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IMPORTANT NOTICE.

Beginning with our April, 1895, issue, which will be the first issue of Volume XXVI., the annual subscription to THE DECORATOR and FURNISHER will be reduced to Two Dollars per Annum; Single Copies, Twenty Cents. In making this important reduction in price our object is simply to extend the circulation of the journal so as to minister to the needs of the rapidly widening circle of those who desire to furnish and decorate their homes with taste and culture. The reduction in price will not mean any lowering of the standard of our journal; on the contrary, we will try to make each issue more attractive than the preceding one.

All subscriptions paid since January 1st, 1895, will be credited with an extra year's subscription free.

THE immense material development of the United States has disseminated a vast amount of wealth among the people at large, with the consequence that there has arisen a wide-spread social enthusiasm for an elegant style of living, which means fine houses, fine clothes, and fine furnishings. The accumulation of wealth is, in most cases, more rapid than the growth of taste, necessary to a proper choice of artistic belonging. In the case of house furnishing the patron very rarely gives the decorator *carte blanche*, but makes it a point of having his house as fine, and, if possible, a little finer, than his neighbor's, in accordance with the amount of money to be spent.

THE views of the client are nothing more or less than a few feeble impressions received by him from current decorative work, as far as he has observed, and when the decorator produces his portfolio of ready-made designs, he says that this design he likes, and those others he dislikes, and so gives the

cue to the scheme which he wishes the decorator to carry out. Having made no study of decorative art, and being ignorant of his own organic needs, and of the needs of the age itself, in the immediate housings of his household, it always happens that he simply chooses the current resurrection of the style of a defunct age, the garments of a bygone generation, to constitute his own particular environment.

THE result of this style of doing business is a stereotyped equipment for the house, for the decorator has doubtless discovered that the most satisfactory way of doing business is to humor his client's notions and invariably recognize their good taste. He makes it his business to create a conviction in the mind of his patron that that worthy knows more about decorative art than he thought he did. He expresses his delight "in conversing with a client so well informed" in matters of interior decoration.

THIS state of things has created the hustling decorator, the man who has the faculty of loudly advertising himself, and who avoids decoration in itself as irrelevant to his business. In point of fact he has a positive dislike for decorative art in the abstract, for whenever he has attempted it to any extent, the result was disastrous from a business standpoint. Not being employed as are other professional men to direct an enterprise involving questions of science and art, by reason of his superior knowledge, but because he has already conceded his client's choice of a scheme to be perfect, he has assumed the position of a mere functionary, and will from two to ten weeks carry out any ordinary contract, for will he not throw from ten to twenty craftsmen on the "job," or as many more as is necessary?

THE patron is delighted. If there is one thing he likes better than another, it is having his house decorated on time, with the speed of an express train. A contract that requires ten weeks' time must be done in five, and if it can be finished in four weeks, so much the better. We can hardly blame the decorator under such circumstances from being a mere hustler in his profession. He is shrewd enough to look after his own material interests, and when he finds these inconsistent with the interests of decorative art, he drops decorative art rather than let decorative art drop him. He becomes even a greater hustler than his patron in getting through with his job, for there is the chance of the patron becoming bankrupt any moment, and when the contract is signed he remarks to his client as he offers him a cigar, "A client of mine said to a mutual friend of ours, 'What I like about him is his promptness. He knows what he is about, for he tells you at once what he can do and what he can't do!'"

ALAS, for the character of the work turned out under such a conspiracy as this! The result is a mere aggregation of decorative furnishings, arbitrarily chosen to please the client's unformed taste, and having no relation whatever to the laws of utility and beauty. The hustling decorator has thus become one of the most pronounced of the obstacles of decorative art. The only way to remove such an obstacle as this is for the patron to inform himself of the principles and methods which govern artistic designs, substantial construction, and color harmony in the equipment of the home. The needs of the times and of the individual should be exhaustively studied, to the end that the present generation should not be doomed to live eternally with the resurrected symbols of bygone times. The cost of obtaining this most desirable information is simply the trivial cost entailed in becoming a subscriber to THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER. The vast number of artistic suggestions delineated on our pages, both by pen and pencil, are certainly worth this small outlay a hundred times over; and the information given continuously in our columns will save our readers tens of thousands of dollars, uselessly squandered on unnecessary, inartistic and inappropriate furnishings.

THE Customs authorities have seized an importation of architectural decorations in carved wood, consigned to Allard & Sons, for the decoration of the new Astor mansion to be erected in this city. The trouble is said to be an undervaluation of the goods, experts testifying that they are worth

the amount of the invoices several times over. The decorations that are held are intended for the grand salon and for Mrs. Astor's boudoir. The door and panelings of both apartments are splendid specimens of the Parisian decorators' art, and are made in sections measured to a nicety, so that when put in place they form a harmonious whole. The wood employed in the decoration of the salon, including the massive doors hung of great bronze hinges, is a very dark, rich oak, paneled relief work being a reproduction of the carved decoration in the Trianon in Paris. This most elaborate work is entirely executed by hand. Over each doorway is a carved group of figures representing epochs in the history of France. These groups are surrounded by carved wreaths, which give the effect an added width to the entrances, on each side of which are long panels, which, though they differ in size, yet are harmonious in design.

The boudoir decorations are in white and gold and consist of delicately carved musical instruments set in the interior panels, which are delicately entwined with carved wreaths. The large central panel is set with a splendid mirror, framed in carved onyx. At the foot of the mirror there is a small mantel, the onyx top of which rests on metal supports. The wainscot of the room is white and gold, exquisitely fashioned.

Fashionable and beautiful as the decorations undoubtedly are, still their very existence is a proof of the weakness of our people in matters of art. The great material success of our country demands its own indigenous celebration in art products and to surround ourselves with the borrowed plumes of a past age and civilization savors of the jackdaw strutting in the plumes of the peacock. We naturally look to our wealthy citizens to take the lead in developing a natural style of art. We have the artists who can develop the forthcoming style if their patrons demand it. The Mahomedans did not adopt the Greek style nor Napoleon the rococo, and it is only artistic imbecility that goes on reproducing bygone styles when a better style can be magnificently elaborated. Our people are to blame for the wholesale theft of foreign ideas now taking place.

THE success of Grasset, Cheret, and in a less important sense, Beardsley and others of that ilk in the line of art posters, has given birth to a host of faddists both here and in Europe, in this particular domain of art expressions, that bids fair to debase the public taste with meretricious ideas in art. Already sensationalism in form and color has become hare-brained incontinence, as loose in its methods as the romantic atrocities of a Harrison.

Now, it is not pleasant to have to feel that way toward the work of any artist, and it is always a painful thing to render up the effort of a talented man to judgment. But faddism is a disease, and is infectious, contagious and malignant. If it meant nothing worse than artistic paresis, confined in its evil results to the individual, it might be easier endured or ignored. But it spreads, and everywhere, because art is not very well understood among the people, who regard it as something mysterious; that is beautiful, and wonderful, and attractive, and that they would give a good deal to be posted in. Faddism, under guises, sows the seeds of fever and decay, and nothing but heroic treatment and conscientious sacrifice can stop its course. We are to-day confronted with designs that frequently show great virility of conception allied to a perfectly amazing and incomprehensible feebleness and myopia in conceptions of beauty, verity, charm or meaning in the figures. Compare such work with the carefully elaborated productions of Leighton, Prinsep, Solomon or Alma Tadema. Here there are no straddling heroes or distorted maids or tragic gloom, nor cold, abnormal anatomies, chosen and done according to the ravings of a madman, but the profound realization that men and women, demigods and heroes, in their lives and loves and hates and passions, are all the same in every age and clime, is the intuition shown in the work.

In the "Dedication to Bacchus," by Alma Tadema, the religion of joy and beautiful demonstration is poetically realized. Exquisite in every detail of workmanship, and sensuous but real in color, befitting the lovely scene and clime, the picture is refined and innocent in its expression of the pure and natural gratitude of a rural Dionysian festival, rather than a bacchanal and grosser indulgence, or revel of voluptuaries, and is also assuredly of a higher order intellectually and artistically than the flattened out nightmares of the faddists.